

LYRICAL POEMS

BY
JOHN ALEXANDER CHAPMAN

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Dedicated to

JANIE DENIZE CHAPMAN

Answering the fool in me according to his folly.

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SWEETPEA RING

IN a hollow, worm-holed nutshell keeping
House a fairy. Under counterpane
Cut from primrose now that fairy sleeping ;
But one riding gnat, with gossamer rein,
Cheeks a-reddened, whistling, comes to wake her.
He will jump in, hole-size, kiss, and take her
To the Beetle House in little shoes,
There to say "This Sweetpea Ring I choose."

So will Sweetpea Ring be wed by firefly-
light, and leaf-held water drops, in each
Winking star reflected. Next the soft, dry
Thistledown will make a bed for them. The beech
Will give a nut; the oak a cup; the corn
Give ear and straw, when fairy boy is born.
And grass will shake, and seed fall down, and berry
Juice in moss-cups make the nutshell merry.

SONG I

SILENCE, a little breath of God, earth-love
Make the songs together
That in men's hearts are heard,
Cheering their weary spirits like summer weather,
Thither as swiftly come as Ark-freed bird

SONG II

BE your song so—ever beautiful :
Thought and word and age-old melody :
Be your singing beautiful and true ;
But in this Day of Wrong
Let some things you do
Be more beautiful than song.

THE SEA

SHE

HAVE you ever noticed the longing
the sea whispers,
Falling, wave on wave, on the shingle,
when the wind
Is wind, but is not high? That is
the sea calling :
That is the sea calling, but with
a cruel voice.
I have often listened to the longing
the sea whispers,
And have wished to run, and give my-
self to it.

HE

I who am a man am whispering long-
ing also.
What could the sea do more, Darling,
than man could do ?

LYRICAL POEMS

It would wash you hither, thither in
its races ;
But it would be washing all the drift-
wood too.
It would not know that yours was a
woman's hair, not seaweed :
It would fill your ear, but as any
empty shell.
Could it stand behind you, and put
a shoulder forward
For a darling head to rest on, lean-
ing back ?
Has the sea two red lips to press
upon two red lips,
Coming laughing down to meet sweet-
ness springing up—

SHE

Yes, you hold me and kiss me, but,
caresses done, you leave me.
Soon you weary and go, and your
footsteps die away.
All about me, around me, are silent,
empty spaces,
And a woman's heart is hungry as the
night is for the day;
As the night for light to come, for
the stars to go to their places ;

For the sun to warm the earth, for
the hills to wake and play ;
For the quick in-breathing horses, the
thundering hooves, the races
Out of the drifting night-mist into
the red of day—
Oh, I am wild ; I am maddened—Dearest,
you talk a little ;
But soon a silence follows, and the
words—I know them all.
There is no mystery more—it is all
so plain and homely ;
And listen, listen, listen, how the waves
on the shingle call.
Why did you marry a girl with gypsy blood,
and the desert
Asses' milk in her breasts, and the wild
wind in her hair ?
I cannot learn to be still—listen, the
sea is saying
Things that soothe and nestle, things
that crush and tear ;
Things that wind and enter into my brain
and pulses ;
Things that hiss, and echo, and gather,
and sob, and dare—
What could a woman want that the sea
would not seek and find her ?

Or if the blue and green deceived, they
 would laugh at her,
And promise her other treasures, and
 wash her in drifting eddies,
Drawing the moon and starshine to play
 with her face and hair.
Or they would weave her clothing of foam,
 and dash her body,
Chafing her limbs to heat in long green
 clashing tides—
Listen, listen, the sea—I think in
 some far-off ocean
There is a beach prepared for the blue
 sea's pearly brides—
Long white sands, sea flowers, shell music,
 and fishes swimming ;
Pearls for the girls to string that some
 great cavern hides.
But in a little a terror, and then each
 glad heart shivers :
One by one they go, pale to an aching
 night ;
For it devours them, the sea, as it
 swallows up all earth's rivers
The hungry sea devours them—O pale
 man, hold me tight,

HE

The sea does not tell you that : your
unseen self is speaking.
The longing you listen to is the long-
ing of your own heart.
I cannot comfort you, Darling. Each must
find his own expression.
God has made too different man and
woman's part.
Each has an inner voice. Man listens
to his, and follows.
Is it to build him a ship ? He listens
and builds him one.
He calls it after a maid. He hammered
the nails to the music
Of that maid's name—at peace, but
so that the work was done.
So that the work was done—if her eyes
are bright in the evening,
That is enough, and she smile, and so
that she bear him sons
For new ships' building hereafter ; for
man hands on his wisdom
And so his days are short, and his bright
river runs
Merrily through the fields to a shore
where all waters mingle—
Or is it to build him an Art ? Again
he builds him one ;

Only the more withdrawn, in a concentrated passion,
Forgetting the maid the more—even
after the work is done.
Now she? Has God put a stop; so that
she cannot listen
To the voice of her unseen soul, or
does it more slowly grow
In volume through the ages, and still
is faint and feeble;
Now heard from here, now there, leading
her to and fro?
The world is fuller for her of poetry
and of music
Than for the man, and of mystery, and
unfulfilled desire—
The desire of the flower and the bird,
and even the light and shadow
The rock, and the sea, and the clouds,
and the darkness, and the fire
She thinks, but it is her own—the
desire of her budded spirit—
When will it grow to leaf; when will
it put out flower?
Was she bound too long, a slave, in
the lust of a brutal market?
Is now the rosy dawn seen of her
freedom's hour?

LOVE IN AGE

WHEN a man is young and loves a maid,
All is plain, the light, the shade;
The unparalleled sweetnesses : the urge
Onward and upward—like the surge
That takes clean-bowed, well riveted ships
At one plunge from the hammering slips
Deep to their native element ;
For to love is to do what a man is meant.

But when a man is old, but still
Young to love, then the sweet ill
Comes in a manner to veil the whole.
A child's face then may surprise his soul,
An instant seen in a village street.
Her lips, the light in her eyes, how sweet.
The light in her eyes—that is the chief
To give the sharp stab of pleasure-grief.
It is a beauty not all their own,
But partly born where his love alone.
Must keep ; for come her time to wed,
His will be an all-silvered head,
Or his will have been that earthy bed.

THE CUP

MAKE of thyself a cup, Darling.
I will make me wine or water.
Let thy heart beat in the cup :
I shall be enough to fill it.
Then will desire be stilled,
Or only to thy heart-beat moving.

NAMING HER

IF you love a maid,
You will love her name. Which name ?
Will it always be the same ?
One used every day would fade
From its brightness ; so you keep
Always one that doth express
All her utter darlingness
In a star-lit, sentinelled
Sea-girt citadel of sleep,
Many-towered, and many-belled
To wake and chime, when it is time
For word with happiness to rhyme.

Another name will speak the praise
Treasured up for solemn days,
When a good fight has been won,
Bravely fought through clouds of night,
And again it is the sun
Uprisen. Another name will run
Forth to meet a teasing spite,
Followed after by delight.
So will always be a name
For one who never is the same.

DELIA

NOTES of bell, and beech-tree green, and starlight
Make her voice, and dress and skin.
Ringing bells, and scent of thyme, and blood-red
Poppies nodding to a tune within
Honeysuckled, wild-rose hedged-in meadow
Call her darling, and the shame
And the darkness of her absence
Make her hair and name.

HER HAIR

IF only I had my Sweetheart's hair to play with !
Now to tumble it about my face.
Now to grasp it all, and make it stay, with
Hands beneath her chin held, round her face ;
Framing cheek-curve, shining eyes, and brow-snow ;
Framing lips, which looked at long, would long
For the kiss delayed, and, trembling, sweet grow
As apple ripening the sunny summer long.

UNCONQUERABLE LOVE

GIVE me thy hands, Love—
But thou, Love, hast none.
Give me thy lips, Love—
But thou, Love, hast none.
Speak with thy voice, Love—
But thou, Love, hast none ;
Formless, timeless, unsearchable one.

INSPIRATION

LEND me thy soul, if only for a day ;
Send thou it forth from those grey eyes ;
Beat with me heart to heart a little. Stay
Close to my side while one hour dies.
There was the world, there was my brain to note
Form of it, colour of it, seeking sign of God :
There in my book are the weary things I wrote :
This is the way my pilgrim footsteps plod ;
But breathe thou into me, and I will leap
Straight to the last, where Life's dark secrets sleep.

MADALA GREY

MADALA Grey, Madala Grey,
Only a girl in a story.
Pretty name, Madala Grey.
Beautiful, too, the soul you are given.
So I will love you, Madala Grey.

Suppose that God who made us men,
Made us so that even our thoughts
Lived for ever. Then Ariels,
Calibans and Prosperos
Would not be all shadowy.

So in some peopled heaven may be
Madala making cowslip balls.

And if not, then the writer,
Or some one whom the writer knew,
Had a soul like Madala's.
Soul then for my loving :
Whom I want for stilling
Of a sense unsatisfied,
As too fine for common day,
And what common day employs.

We are dreamers: imagination
Devours our life.

We would love without a fault;
Never bring a shadow to
Face of her we love.

We are not fine enough, coarse clay
Made of, greed with greed commingled,
Fated so to bring of shadows
Many on her face we love.
But if those we love are made
In our thought; if we make both
Loving and response together;
If it all is story told
To ourselves, then why not make
All as sweet as violet,
Wood-grown, dewy, scented,
Forest eyes for kissing,
Beautiful blue and green together ?

So I will love you, Madala;
You or the unknown with that soul,
Somewhere making cowslip balls.

2.

What I want you specially
For is for a thing so fine
As would just suit spirit.
Listen; I will tell you.

I had a son. He died.
Another son was born. I thought
That Holy Writ in amulet
Hung round his neck would charm
Goblins away. Not right? Then thought
Must do as well, woven round him,
I said. Now do that, Madala.
Watch over Paul that no harm come.

My own thought is so foolish.
Come wish to do him good that way,
Then I remember all that night
In March, when one came knocking,
Saying, "Madame vous appelle".
Then I went and first saw Paul.

"Madame vous appelle"—the words
Haunt me since then. Because in French?
Perhaps. Perhaps because never,
I used to think, should I be ever
Called by a woman. Not the kind of man
Any girl cares for—so my thought.

The rest of that night? Once,
Years before, I slept on Hampstead Heath,
A little birch clump hiding me
From the policeman. Just at dawn
A bird called, one. Clear in the air,
Thrilling me. Then a silence,

Say for four minutes, then a crash,
All the birds within hearing all together,
And hundreds more than you would think
Were in that peopled place.

Paul seen; that night remembered,
Suddenly came desire to hear
That crash again, then twenty years
Old in my brain. So in the dark,
Over the snow, tramping, I spent
The night till dawn. March is a month
Too early, there in Blonay, for the birds.
There was no crash. Only at five
A blackbird singing
From a tall tree, I thinking
Ever of Paul, and how his brother died:
Till blackbird's song seemed charm
For Paul, keeping him safe.
And now it is as if the letters
Making his name were blackbird song.

3.

Leave off cowslip ball making.
Unkissed Madala unkissed come.
I want to talk to you, Madala.

I love your name, Madala.
Lipless breastless word.

Pour the milk of the stars into
Cup, but not for Paul, urchin.
Make him a cowslip ball, Madala.

4.

Birch clump keeping out policeman,
Blackbird, cowslip, Paul and Madala,
Brain of father dreaming amulet,
Remembered dead one's inspiration—
Wherein rooted, whence the loveliness?

CHARMIAN

CHARMIAN, on the world's stage little seen,
And little heard, o'ershadowed by that Queen.
And yet we know thee, girl; thy dimpled arm,
Thy smile, wit, mischief, trusting heart and charm
Who (as thy name is) is as Spring's first breath,
Kept ever sweet by thy devoted death.

RUTH

HER name is spelt in four bright stars.
Their sound is the music of old, sweet bars.
The whole earth gathers up its truth
At the mercy and beauty and trust of Ruth.

TO A CHILD

DEAR Little Child, dear little mystery,
There is a thing to say—I love you.
Only three words, but they are as long as history.

KITE CALLS *

KITE calls in the morning
These days of December;
Kite calls in the evening.

I my Love lacking
Hear and remember
Hers and young voices.

Old trees are budding
These days of December.
Buds are like children.

Come, girls, assemble.
Earth's vows remember.
Give us more children.

* In Bengal, where trees do bud in December.

TO I.H.

IF in a waste of sand a man should spend
Year after year, and make of pain a friend;
If the cold dawn was grey, and the eve went
Unlit by star in the bleak firmament:
If never bird sang—but one day a rain
Fell, and the night lit all her stars again:
If the dawn saw a little point of green
Thrust from the ground where never flower
 was seen;
If day by day it grew till one flushed hour
Colour peeped out and broke, and a
 dream-flower
Opened blue petals, flame succeeding flame,
That man would feel as he when Iris came.

AT LAST

HUSH. He had waited fifty years. One day
Sign of her came, a hint, a stir.
Another day another, but she never came.
"Soul, have no hope more, never more, of her.
She must have died, a little child." To-day
Looking up he saw her—mouth and eyes and hair,
And soul and spirit speaking, and in his heart awoke
Joy that was too vast for any heart to bear.
"So hush, my heart," he said, "and God will
 make an ease.
He will lay my weary head at last upon
 her knees."

KATHLEEN

ALL for the Love of the Western Land,
Snowdrop blossom, Kathleen, Kathleen.
Up to the shore a slope of sand,
Crimson poppy, Kathleen, Kathleen.
Lambs in meadows with daisy-chains,
Windflower blossom, Kathleen, Kathleen,
Peacocks in gardens flaunting trains,
Snowdrop blossom, Kathleen, Kathleen.
And red the blood that the men would shed,
Crimson poppy, Kathleen, Kathleen,
Only to make more soft thy bed,
Windflower blossom, Kathleen, Kathleen.

TO STELLA MARIS

STELLA Maris, Stella, star
Of the sea, the two things are,
Night so bright and sea so blue,
Not more beautiful than you.

Stella Maris, star, arise :
Time is long and daylight dies :
Night is kindly, lit by you :
Light, O light, my darkness too.

Light of star and sound of sea—
If to mortal man could be
Music sung as pure as they
All his sorrow would away ;

As my sorrow would, if you,
Stella Maris, speaking true,
Promised me—but I would not
Burden lay on you ; and what

Is there, Stella, left to claim,
Now that you have told your name ?
I have heard it from your lips,
Where the deep sea leadeth ships.

What can thought of girl not lead
Man to—good or evil deed?
Be, then, pure as waters are;
Live, God near, a spirit-star.

ROBINETTA

SOMEWHERE—if I've a little forgotten where,
It does not matter—there's a road, a moor,
A cliff, and a bright spot of colour there.
Suddenly looking up from work, "I'm sure,"
I say, "I've read that somewhere. Where?"

Then: "Now

I know—*her* book." That beckoning spot of red
Covers an all-earth's-sweetness gathering brow,
The red silk cap on Robinetta's head.

THE MESSAGE

I sent her the Robin. The Robin came, and said :
"I, the Red Breast, say unto thee, the White Breast,
What is thy wish, where thy lover should lay his
head?"

"He has the thought, O Robin, and that there beats
A heart beneath it that ever is true to him.
It sweetens the water he drinks, the bread he eats".

THE BLANKET

WHEN it is getting dark they put below it
Something, but what it is it does not know
Till it is warmed; then it begins to know it—
“That is a little arm and that a toe”.
So whisper together the little blanket voices;
“Yes, it is growing, but still is soft and round
And pink”—and the blanket’s little soul rejoices
All the night long, but never makes a sound.
But in the morning Ann’s red fingers take it
Roughly away, and out at the window shake it.

BEING SWEETHEARTS

AS clothes remade, turned inside out,
That they may have what's fair to show,
Men turn their weaknesses about ;
And those who cannot forward go,
Go round about, but find a way
On their self-praising tongue to make
What is of night look like the day ;
And darkness love for its own sake.

Now may I say I am not sure
Of one thing that myself I taught,
Yet verily with mind quite pure
Of self-deceiving guile, I thought.
Out of some things in Holy Writ
And other books I fashioned it,
And was to guide my steps thereby
O'er smooth and rough—whichever lay
Beyond me on my pilgrim way—
Until it came my time to die ;
And even then, among the wan
Shadows that flitted with me fast,
Some help from it should bear me on,
Till all the dreadful way was past.

2

There came a girl to have the rule—
One nurtured in another school—
Within my house, which meant o'er me
As well, if I should think that fit,
Or whether I should, or whether I shouldn't:
Who was to call the tune was she.
Agree I might, or not, she wouldn't
Admit her knowledge of Holy Writ,
Or anything else, was not enough
To show my ethics to her as plainly
A weakling's preferring smooth to rough.

I hoped she'd change her mind, but vainly.
Time passeth, but she changeth not,
Or owneth not, and that's as much.
And she's a pretty girl, and such
A darling—oh, but really, truly.
I'd like, unless it means unduly
Stretching truth, to think that what
She says is right. But all my liking,
Trying one time, kissed on Sunday ;
Then again, unkissed, on Monday—
Hasn't made the smallest jot
Of difference. But this is striking
Much too light a note, for grave
Is the matter ; and that gave—

Its being so—the impulse needed
For my asking in a song,
One she would not leave unheeded,
If my darling is not wrong.

It is a very serious matter
At one girl's bidding to undo,
However beautiful and true
She be, what many years of thought
Have made a rule. And do they know,
Do our girls know as know they ought,
That two and two and twice eight go
To make up twenty, whence one takes
Five, leaving fifteen ; but God makes
His creatures on another plan ?
You cannot take this from a man,
Whate'er it be, and leave a whole
Left over, body, mind, and soul,
To love and lean on. You must ply
Some much more subtle alchemy,
If you've a husband who's not quite
All that your busy brain thinks right.
All that, my own dear girl may say,
She knows right well, and that 'twas just
Her alchemy at work to-day
That set me thinking that I must

Consider well that 'tis no treason,
But how men make their darlings Queens,
To give their rules up without reason ;
That that's what being sweethearts means.

THE SORROW OF THE DEATH OF LITTLE
CHILDREN. 11*

1.

WE gave thee all, we gave thee all we could,
In love and trust
That God consented, and would make it good.

We gave thee life, and if it hath no worth,
Now thou art dead,
It is a doom that heaven will share and earth ;

Which we shall share—oh, should our hearts
be sore

Who have so short
A time, and so much beauty to think o'er ?

Unless for beauty undisclosed we mourn ;
For if all end
With death, then we are utterly forlorn ;

* For the earlier portion of this poem see *Christus Natus Est* (Calcutta, 1923)

But if no thing created doth depart

Back to the void

It issued from, eternally thou art

A mind—which opened here to little things;

Which hour by hour

We watched, and for whose beauty something sings

To-day in our sad hearts; a mind whose power,

In that new sphere,

Can know no hampering of place or hour;

And what it needs the forward steps to guide

God, in his love

For little children, surely will provide.

2.

Each night, before I sleep, I say:

God bless you, Little One, and then

Some picture I recall,

Or well-remembered trait;

But would that what I do—yea, all—

Might have the love of him for law;

That love of him might be

The very breath I draw.

Then, at the last, in some full line,
The world should feel and hear and see
 How beautiful he was,
 And its heart beat with mine.

No, not for loveliness of theme. Because
It felt the influence, subdued
 To which my soul would show
 With what it was imbued.

3.

Oh, is there anything, my child,
That you could do for her and me?
You made, when you were here and smiled
The best of our felicity;
But now the heavy days go past,
And other comfort there is none,
But clinging to the thought so fast,
How well we loved you, little one;
How you, who were so soon to be
Laid the last time on earth to rest,
Were with us so continually—
Here in my arms, there at her breast.

4.

O Little Sweetheart, did you know
 You were so soon to die,
And did resolve that you would show,

Before the days went by,
The days so few, how deep the joy
Might be about a little boy ?

You gave us more than we could tell
Each other of ; but each
Knew what was passing, and as well
Were words of happy speech
Addressed to you, and your replies
Were read in those dear laughing eyes.

5.

Of all he did we loved
This most—the way he moved
His head to watch whoever stirred, and when
Eyes and eyes met, he smiled
So sweetly, that a child
Of all God's gifts seemed the most perfect then.

6.

A joy has ever power to make
A difference in things :
They change, all suddenly, and take
Some of the light it brings.
If light, though darkness follows, rest
On life, that is faith's final test.

On life from the gathered dark apart ;
 For empty would they be,
The words that should deny the heart
 Its human misery—
Empty, and senseless as a clod,
Whether men uttered them or God.

We still must think that things are seen
 More truly in the light
Of some great joy, than when the sheen
 Is dulled and faded quite ;
More truly when heaven's light they wear
Than in the dead and sunless air

Till darkness final, absolute,
 Down-rushing is descried,
The faith in which we love impute
 To heaven is justified,
And pity felt for those in woe
More than we one another show.

7

Around his resting-place there lie
Four other children's graves ;
But no one comes but thou and I.
The others 'cross the waves
Long since are gone, and now are laid
Beneath some English church's shade.

It would be beautiful if they
In heaven should feel his claim
To love, because his body lay
So close beside the name
That marks a little longer where
Each breathed the broken-hearted prayer.

O India, if we serve thee well,
Think not the debt all paid.
Forget not, when thy fathers tell
The children, that we made
That sacrifice, nor whom the sea
Taketh. We leave behind with thee

The graves in which our children lie
So thick, that if the dead
Awoke and stood, while thou wentst by.
The sight would bow thy head.
Forget *us*, if thou must, but keep
Holy the places where *they* sleep.

8

The law hath been established; and to rule
Each thing conforms;
And in that hard, soul-tempering, iron school
Man is implanted, who, in his despair,
Craves that an ear
Should hear his desolate, heart-broken prayer ;

But it, I think, could any be, would be
 Not so soon heard
And answered as the pathetic things that we

Have heard his little brother, little sister, say,
 Since Richard died—
Things of a trustfulness to win their way :

Yet to be gathered to the silent fold
 Of Time when we,
Whose hearts the inexpressible pathos smote, are cold.

9

Oh, that he could come back
One day a week, one sun-drenched happy day,
And smile again. If I could take the way
That leads to Death, and pass him in the dark,
Hearing his little footsteps, and so knowing
That he would soon be folded in her arms
To whom such loving recompense is owing,
And should be paid. If then I could return
To hear of all his beautiful new ways,
And who his little playmates are in heaven—
If that could be, my Darling, how the days
 Would glow about our feet.
The going and the coming in such peace
Would shed a light in all the empty rooms;
Would spread a silence through the empty house.

I have longed all my life for such a peace ;
For some deep, hushed communion, in the light
Not of this earth, but of eternity.
What if it were the gift of his dead hands ;
What if the hush, that day we buried him,
Grew deeper, was prolonged, on, on, and on ;
Never to end until some morning came,
And when I woke his hands were in my hands ?

HARD CHASTITY

IT was a pool of deep, dark summer rain
That in the moonlight two men stood beside.
In each there throbbed the pain
Of the forbidden, the unsought-for bride;
Forbidden lest their marrying young retard
The slow uplift of their class to wealth and ease,
Well-housed and well-groomed leisure—but how hard;
Would it be sin for such to seize
Each a sweet girl, and with her make night sweet,
Or sweeter, for already 'twas summer-scented
With may, and for naked limbs a cowslipped sheet
Was spread under a wine-dark heaven, tented?

To kiss the night away, and when dawn came
To watch the girl in the pool, and see the flame
Of sunrise pink her lately budded breast—
Would it have been all sin and lust and shame?
Such thoughts in those two men were hard
 down-pressed,
Silent, tight-strangled: for a word would have made
The Elder-spoken, text-backed moral teaching

Rush into ruin, and they were afraid ;
Afraid of the kinder preaching,
Spoken at dawn, of soft-fleshed beasts,
As better to follow. "Listen! Strawberry feasts,
Gathered in dock leaves, for pretty, red-lipped girls—
Young ivy leaves and roses in soft brown curls
Entwined—and, after feasting, the beechen shade
For two, and one a maid.
Afar the sea makes clean the shore !
Under you earth is pure ;
Of bells and cups a many more
Upprow to heal and cure.
Seek as the flowers your joy.
What is there to annoy,
If breast that baby hand will beat
With man's cheek pressed to it is sweet ?
Then take her, take her !"

So the soft-fleshed beasts,
Moving in warm fields, nature's priests ;
And his mate a-following each.
Sin ? Was there not in clean-barked beech,
With hands laid on, of purity enough,
Though one was ram to ewe,
To cleanse ? What, then, to rue ?
Why turn smooth years to rough ?

Something of that awoke in one of them. Then stirred
A shiver; for a druid voice was heard,
There by the beech-tree-shaded pool of rain,
And he would give a sign, and ease his pain.
Why was the druid worshipping, and cut
The mistletoe, and stones set upright, but
That in the life-force stimulating man
To action was just one more prompting than
His daily toil, his loving, his upbringing
Of children satisfied, his play, his singing?
And so, at prompting of the yew,
And calling it divine,
They found a thing to do.
Just so that one of them would give a sign—
One in which human love and woodland met—
He bent to the water, and made a finger wet,
And touched his friend's cheek, drawn, pale with
 the fever
Of the unloved, the unloving, the unseeking lover.

COLOUR

How that old wall lives, now the sun
Is on it, making soft greys show,
And browns, and faint, faint purples ; lighting moss,
The little-needle cushions. Let a cloud
Cover the sun, the drizzling rain begin,
And all once more is blank and dead—just stone.

Blood-poppies in the corn, though dark clouds lour,
And rain fall drearily, still trumpet out
The psalm of rushing colour from glad earth.

You are the wall, Dear ; he, thy friend, the sun.
Ah, yes, you live, he with his sunny soul
Being there to make your soft greys show and
 purples—
He with his praise of purples and soft greys.

I am the cloud, Dear, and the dreary rain,
The city-smoked, soot-laden chilling drizzle,
I, with my body sick, and sick ambition.

Be a blood-poppy in the corn, my Dear.
 Trumpet me psalms of colour from glad earth.
 A lark's voice by and by may answer you.

BIRDS

WANDERERS are they more than we,
The winged ones, over earth and sea.
Once they come, when grass is thin :
They leave when corn is brought to bin.
Swift they come, and swift they go.
Over the hills, over the flow
Of the Mediterranean deep
With unresting wings they sweep.

It is the law of all their kind
To wander, and with ready mind
The birds obedient scholars are,
And hear each whisper from afar.
Therefore they now are on the wing,
Summoned each one to come and sing
In English woods that empty were
Of sound but of the winds astir.

Was there a windy whisper sent
Over the sea and continent ;
Of sorrel seen in English woods,
And daffodilies opening hoods ;

A reed-pipe spreading news of thaw,
And bramble soon and hip and haw ;
That hedges were no longer bare,
Nor water frozen anywhere ?

There is for me an equal law,
With limb for wing and foot for claw.
I am as native at nature's knee
As bird in air or fish in sea.
I have a nest to build as well,
And some to feed, and know no hell ;
And know no heaven, or it is near ;
It is not over the sea, but here.

CARE-FREE

O little bird, sing on.
My heart is free.
Gone are the days of sorrow, and gone
The thoughts that, like a sea
Surging with hoarse and billowy swell,
Now ebbd and stilled,
Once all my lone heart filled,
And strewed my life with ruin of weed and shell.

O little bird, sing on.
Thy heart is free.
Gone are the days of summer, and gone
Thy little ones from thee.
They flew from the nest and sheltering eaves,
With wings abreast,
And now afar they rest,
And fill their song with murmur of wind and leaves.

THE VOICELESS

PLACES that I have trodden with my feet—
An alpine forest, snow-bound, silent, frozen ;
A pool, brown water, beech trees, and the Prosen—
Here as I walk this hot Calcutta street,
Thinking of them, is made a bar
Around me, as of peace and strength
And silence islanding a star.

THE BIRCH TREE

IT was a maiden, sure, too white
For man to uncover to his sight,
And so Pan touched her, and she grew a birch.
Those were her finger tips,
Where the raindrop slips :
The leaves in the air
Once were all sunny hair.

AUTUMN

NOW it is autumn time the woods
Are full of robin song—
Little snatches soon repeated.
The Elves listen, seated
Under the damp, brown toadstool hoods.

BULBUL

RED-VENTED, white-cheeked Bulbul, crested,
Piping few notes, bell-like, musical,
Likest to his, the loved Red-breasted,
Now I have watched thee among the rushes,
Home I, happy in thee, and rested.

SHAMA'A

BLACK-HEADED, brown-breasted
Shama'a for whistling.

LOVE

MEN may love children, and yet never know
Their souls' soul till God give them of their own :
Men love ripe corn in autumn, but if sown
With their own hands, and if they watch it grow—
You think not ? Nay, I feel it must be so,
And just a moment, but again it's gone,
I saw the infinite love pour down upon
The creatures whom God knoweth, as none know
Even their children. A moment, one, all things
Were close to me, all, even to the bird
Singing in far off alp unseen, unheard ;
Even to its grass and stones. It seemed my hands
Had made them all—the swelling throat that sings,
The seeds that fall, the grey stone's crumbled sands.

DEATH

I.

'TIS after-eve : that is Arcturus setting :
Yonder the Himalayan snows uplift
The eternal purity above the drift
Of cloud, and for an hour is peace from fretting.
Down in the valley a lonely bird is calling—
Down in the valley where the trees are lost
To something in the dusk like dark hoar-frost.
On the hill-side, and faster night is falling.

O God, who made the silence and the beauty,
And heart of man for it to touch and fill,
Whence cometh too this awful lust to kill,
At call of conscience and dictate of duty.
What unclean things with love of one's own kind
At the dark roots of life are fast entwined ?

II

Here seemeth it like an eternal peace
Spread by God's hands within the encircling
hills,
And yet each hour, each moment, a creature kills
After his kind, and that will never cease.
If in this new Gethsemane He stood,
All in an agony of thought and prayer,
And stayed the thing, would each be filled, as where,
By the lake-side, He fed the multitude ?

It needs must be that death, which in the plan
Of all created things is integral,
Has in its being something to annul
For God the sorrow that it is for man.
Then let us hence in trust that what we see
Is a true image of the peace to be.

PROPHETS

WAS it more certain that a man be known
For prophet—from Beersheba unto Dan—
When all a race, secluded, lived alone,
And all a people made a little clan?
When few could tell unto what other doors
The hill tracks led, or if the pathless sea,
That left the beach, went on to other shores,
Or stretched for ever, uncontrolled and free.
Beyond the twilight of the world, to grey
And voiceless wastes of water, where the steep
Path of the sun is hid at close of day,
And homeless stars are shepherded like sheep
That gather in the fold, till morning dawns
To scatter them about the upland lawns?

INDIA

THREE hundred millions breathing, and not one
To leave a name, or dictate of his will,
Clear voiced, for children's children to fulfil;
But be forgotten all: remembered none!
Thus now, and ever while the ages run,
Millions of beings rise, and strive, and pass
Like morning dew upon the summer grass,
And yet have nobly suffered, nobly done.
Or it may be, before his beard is grown,
That one will leap into a Titan's throne
By huge success in mind or war, and be
Deathless until the final trump is blown.
A Buddha or a Rama, and no sea
Of time prevail to drown his memory.

THE SPRING-CHILD

WHEN April comes the Spring-Child does
not say :

" My days, each year, have end in winter drear ;
My flowers all fade, and every leaf turns sere ;
The frosts come and the snows, and hide away
My meadows. I will keep my maidenhood
From fields so full of ghostly, misty fear. "
No ! 'Tis again as when God made the year
Her bare feet flash in every budded wood.
So, in three days, to make my darling feel
Nothing of me as old, no kiss, no lure ;
No circling arms, no whisper of her name ;
Nothing as common, nothing stale and poor ;
To make her feel herself a rosy flame,
And hear the wood-bells ring a marriage peal.

THE ALIEN

1

HOW deep the love of any land must be
For poets to be heard in it this shows,
That I, in whom the love of England rose
To singing, when I came across the sea
To India, saw and loved the land, but knew
That I a stranger was, and could not be
As one who learned his speech at the Mother's knee,
Revealer thence of what makes man's word true.
For never only the things seen by the eye,
Or that the ear heard, are what stir the heart
Of men; but what those in the darkling womb
Grow to of song. Shapes, sounds there fall and die;
The scales drop off to show the hidden part.
I saw my stranger-poem a gaudy tomb.

2

So in an ode I pleaded that one should be
Interpreter of what the fields and sky,
The colour of things, the flight of birds, their cry.
Say to an ear tuned to a deeper key.
"Come Indian child," I said, "and speak to me.
'This is no temple where thy feet were stayed
Outside, as mine at the carved fane they made
With hands, lonely, beside the stretch of sea."
In books of Toru Datta and Tagore
Is love of Indian land; but never has one
Into whose face I looked revealed to me
Aught of the thing that bamboo grove, or sun
Lighting the paddy, has for him of more
Than common day—of what a Keats would see.

3

It is too shy a thing for them to say
To any stranger. It is too deep a thing
For any language but their own to sing
To them. They are men—they do not wish to pay
Homage to alien for a golden lay
Of Ind. I hear their dumb thought :—"Leave the
breast

Of India for our heads to seek, and pressed
On it to find warmth there. For you it is clay".
It is not clay for me ; but I turn my face
To other shores. I would not wrong a blade
Of Indian grass. It is a holy place.
I tread it with my feet : but they are made
Tender as Radha's breast, and all I see
Is a hushed secret between her and me.

TRAVEL IN INDIA

AND once we passed a river, which in the blest
Sunshine was blue, and the blue fields were rare,
Of blossoming flax. The wheat, with which no tare
Uppgrew, was softly green. "Ah ! I could rest
Happily there", I said, feeling the best
Awake in me, from under heavy care :
"If I could be a pilgrim wandering there,
Until death came upon my lids down-pressed ;
A wanderer in India, till the stain
That Europe gives in all her darkened towns,
From doubt, contention, and the weary pain
That throbs beneath her surplices and gowns,
Should melt under the sunshine and the rain,
Amid those kindly blues and greens and browns".

A DEDICATION

THERE is a flower called Star of Bethlehem.
I have not seen it, but I think I know
How in a purer world that flower would grow
And I would make it dedicate to them,
Dorothy, Zita, Eileen, who, when thought
Still was of shepherds coming to the manger.
Treated me not as unregarded stranger,
But gladly gave the friendship that I sought :
But, since man may not dedicate a flower
Of God, be theirs this winter bloom of song,
Written near Bethlehem in one strong hour
Of hope for the too darkened soul of man :
Seeing them so, I ask : May not the wrong
Die from the race even within Time's span ?

CHILDHOOD'S FIRMAMENT

FOR all the beauty of the firmament
Of childhood's years—arched heaven, and wonder-blue,
And the strange, patterned stars, and all the new
Moons that were handless, silver sickles, bent—
For those I had, and have, a heart content,
Though I have many sorrows, and the charm
Might in dark days and sad have taken harm ;
But close within my heart it was up-pent.
I have still greater treasures than those years
Had presage of—so many that the count
Exceeds the power to marshall and to tell.
My eyes have seen, though often dim with tears,
New things to be from a diviner fount,
And once I heard a far, unearthly bell.

FAINT-HEART

A little while we all together go,
When life is young, and hearts are glad and free
As wild white birds whose voice is to the sea
A music set above the ebb and flow.
We hear, and in our hearts the echo know,
And follow, follow—but the bird is flown,
By the wild winds into the tempest blown,
And we are wingless, and our footsteps slow.
O bird of ocean, fierce, intrepid, free,
Why did such children choose thee for their guide ?
'Thou lovest the tempest's tumult, but dare we
The desolation's wrath and wrack abide ?
We seek some rest of quiet beach to win,
To breathe awhile before new toils begin.

UNDOING

THE world is old : much is the thought that men
Have given to human duty, human things,
Seeking to lay strong bases ; but day brings
New men, and what was written with the pen
But yesterday is all that lives for them :
The older is a page now dim and blurred ;
The style is strange, the wisdom is not heard :
So flows a tide of folly none can stem.
The pregnant page of warning and command
Becomes a place for hunting up and down.
"Who was this fellow mentioned here ?" "This shows
Interpolation by a later hand".
"It does not !" So the professors come to blows,
And it is all the talk of half the town.

INSPIRATION

WE sojourn in a world too dark with care,
So, if in bitterness a plaint you sing,
The world will give you back a questioning stare.
Oh, do not to their sorrows sorrow bring !
Oh, do not more their maddened passions heat,
But sprinkle on their brows refreshing rain,
You who could listen to the inward beat
Of this cool earth that knows not care or pain !
Therefore, for inspiration of this song
I take the gladness of the innocent soul ;
And will not stay where darkling spirits throng,
But o'er their grave a mighty stone would roll ;
In hope that there may be one tear the less,
That one glad heart my own glad heart may bless.

WORK

FORGIVE me this. There's work that from the deep
Spirit of life lies far as dreams ; and it
As little counts to temper souls as sleep ;
As little feeds the mind as something writ
In three words, which a parrot might repeat,
A million times repeated. You, poor clerk,
I pity ; I, poor clerk that was, entreat
The gods to lead you soon from that dead, dark,
And dreary world. And if a man be poor,
And have no more than poetry to show
To prove his gift—yet gift it is as sure
As any—poor, degreeless, he must go
And clerk it for a living. Many years
I eat that bread, and salted it with tears.

GOVERNMENT

FORGIVE, too, if I say there might have more
Been given me to do. Work still is here
In India, where all changes, to the core
Nearer, and fitter for my hands. You fear
To trust great things to a mere poet? Dread
His bungling? With more sense than *that* you choose
Your public men? You do so? It is said
No people is more careless, and you lose
The character your fathers had, the respect
Of India—with your Hardinge and your Duff;
You with your Gorsts and Birrells! Your defect
Precisely is that not one-tenth enough
You care who governs you, and at a mess
You rage, then lapse again to carelessness.

MILITARISM

NOT righteous for they make themselves a law
Not paralleled in heaven. They take for creed
To sate each red-raw, devastating greed
With worship of bare tooth and sharpened claw.
They seek to blanch the human face with awe,
When handless, piteous children's arm-stumps bleed.
Oh, that some Dante, with iron hands, would feed
The brute, cramming the dung-stuff down its maw.
Poor fools, poor fools, we dance and sing, and play
Each peace-time. Boys go kissing. Maids are wed.
While in lone chambers old men, ashy-grey,
Plot the next monster hell will bring to bed.
We dress it up, a pretty thing to see.
We play fine music, marching happily.

THE RIGHTS OF NATIONS

RESPECT the rights of nations ! Let that be.
But there are rights of men, and they should not
Forgotten be. One is to hate to see
A fair, rich land misruled, and made a blot
Upon the face of earth, with ruin, strife
Anarchy there. What if some greed move, too,
The conqueror? Is aught quite pure in life?
Have you an alchemy to make men new?
So you who now the generations make
Count not too much on man's forbearance. Deep
In human nature is the will to take
And use what others are too weak to keep.
Know you so sure, too, that it's not God's will
That others should take and use what you use ill?

THE PROUDER SPIRIT

WHO are those bondage spirits whom the chains
Of fate and heavy circumstances bind ?
Know they no promptings of immortal kind,
But still are bowed and racked beneath their pains ?
Go tell them that the prouder spirit disdains
Ever to moan in darkness and to sweat ;
He is too straight from Heaven to forget
His heritage on earth and glorious gains.
A moment and he was not—then the dark
Was troubled, and to breath a shape was given
For battle and for victory: and hark !
The songs of life break through the curtain riven !
Worlds after worlds flash to his inmost ken,
And pleasant are the gaudy haunts of men !

3

THE GOSPEL OF SPIRIT

THE grave—if we were sure it was the end,
And beyond it there stood not any friend
 To ask: Did we control
 The world, and make the soul
Master, though in a house so little known?
 Then should we moan
At ease to have lived so long; to know no more
Than human love behind a still-shut door.

Only to grow as rooted cowslips grow,
And then to die away, and never know
 Desire for more than rain
 After the warmth, and pain
Of dying in the autumn dark and cold:
 Never to hold
The end in vision, morning after night,
The spirit's release, the time-free, arrowy flight,

ECCLESIA

THE spirit moveth me to-night to consider.
Light is light, but clouds are dark and hide it
Clouds have gathered again: the light has vanished
For nine parts of mankind. Only a remnant
Hears the gospel. Faint grow the words and fainter.

Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done,
In earth as it is in heaven.

Let us go back two thousand years. The world
Is old: Christ not yet born, but there are cradles,
Reed-made, wicker cradles, in which Peter,
John, Mary Magdalene, Martha, Mary, Lazarus,
The Baptist, Philip, others, to old folk-music
Will rock to sleep. A little, and they will listen
To one who spoke as never yet man spoke,
But will not turn away, saying "Incredible!
This thing he says." "The Father—who is the Father?"

**"Righteousness—what may it be ?" "Heaven—where's
heaven ?"**

**So then, if it be sensible to think
That Man rose from some cousinship with ape,
Himself a worm once, here is seen to be,
Here in this common sympathy with Christ,
A notable thing—one worthy, in a world
In which the common house-fly has a book
Written about it, all serious men's attention.**

**Or go back further still, back to Elkanah,
Wedded to two, Penninah and barren Hannah.
Lo, unto Hannah a little son is born,
And Hannah in her gladness sings : "There is
None holy as the Lord. He maketh poor.
He maketh rich. He raiseth up the poor.
Out of the dust he lifteth up the beggar.
His saints' feet he will keep; the wicked
In darkness shall be silent"—notable words,
Arguing cousinship with the divine, if certain
The kinship with the ape.**

**So man had searched,
There in the world, or deep in his own spirit,
And had brought home those sheaves.**

Then David, psalmist,
Singing alone, easing a heart full, sang
Such words as: "Turn our captivity, O Lord,
As the rivers in the south." "Except the Lord
Do build the house, their labour is but lost
That build it." "Except the Lord do keep the city,
The watchman waketh but in vain."
"He maketh him households like a flock of sheep."
"He knoweth whereof we are made:
He remembereth that we are but dust."

Aye, but the dust at least had found a voice;
Had learned to speak of loveliness, holiness.
At evening, in the twilight, in the garden,
God seemed to walk. In the dust's mouth were words
Beautiful, as *gospel*, *peace*. Dust hated—
Not always, but now and then—greed and corruption,
Filth, blasphemy, abomination. Dust abhorred—
Even *abhorred*, having a strange, fierce passion—
The ways of the wicked; built him arks to shield him,
Of wood or of spirit, from the contamination.
Truly a long way for dust to have come already.

Suppose now that a man comes, one who speaks
As never yet man spoke; but yet a man,
No more divine than you are, or than I am,
But *as* divine, being in a world he made not;
Made not himself of self-producing matter;

Having a dim-divined, strange, unknown origin—
Suppose he comes, teaching, and others listen—
Beautiful souls they too, as might be likely,
As born of a race during long centuries nurtured
Among God's lilies; sung to by Hannahs, Davids,
Ruddy, and having beautiful faces, and singers—
Suppose, then, that to that man others listen.

Now, could he speak as never yet man spoke,
Being no more divine than you or I ?
Easily. Sundry men write sonnets, dramas;
They are admired; but presently comes Shakespeare;
He at the same thing looks; writes the same language
But such as stars his sonnets, clay all others.
What thing it is *he* sees, knows, and so utters.
Other men see each image blurred with another;
Nothing defined and sharp, and so see nothing—
So comes this man, teaching, and all men marvel.

Then suppose sundry hide-bound, prosperous creatures,
Buttressed high in their own esteem, with faces
Such as the curious eye may pick out quickly
Anywhere in the world where men are wealthy—
Suppose they take this teacher one dread Friday,
And crucify him, and so once more a riddance.

Suddenly in the hearts of his disciples—
Beautiful souls they too, and poor and simple;
Nearer the ears of corn, and birds, and lilies,
As farthest from all pomp and power—suddenly
Flames in their hearts the passionate, great conviction
That the dead Master other men transcended:
The word he spoke alone the word that mattered.

What his word? "Be righteous—naught else matters."
And he made it forthwith plain to children—
But to children only—that if each one
Loved his neighbour as himself, then that one
Was a righteous man. A rule to follow.

And some followed—sure a Paul would listen—
And some followed, and God's peace descended
To their hearts; and when some scribe had written
All the story down, in quiet cloister
First this man would think to add this marvel;
Then this other to add this other marvel,
Ever led still farther on and farther;
But forgetting meanwhile to be righteous;
Lost, a child, in beautiful day-dreaming—
I, at least, do think that would be likely.

Then into the quiet cloister cometh
One not such a dreamer, and he sayeth :
"Tell me now the story ; tell it truly.
All cannot be true I find here written."
"All is true !" they tell him. "Did our fathers
Tell the story not as here it's written ?
Take one line away, and it all crumbles ;
The temple crumbles that our fathers builded."
So they talk, forgetting to be righteous.

Then the men outside the cloister hear it—
How the Master was from heaven descended
Unto earth to bring peace and glad tidings
Unto men—whence presently more questions ;
Thence theology soon more compacted ;
For when with thing that's doubtful, dark, improbable—
Remember that all this is but supposing—
You meet mankind, men being critical,
Needs be that you be proof at every point
Against their questions ; and to make theology,
Being so arduous, tendeth to forgetting
Of any simple precept to be righteous.

For one says : "But how from heaven descended,
And then crucified ?" And straight the answer :
"God, even God himself, came to atone for
The sins of the world." Whence presently disputing :
"Isn't vicarious punishment immoral ?"
So the more forgetting to be righteous.

Now the Christ is preached all the world over.
All the folk within the fold are gathered.
Cathedrals have been built, and parish churches,
Hospitals, alms-houses, goods and chattels,
With still more forgetting to be righteous.

But much more theology's compacted.
For the church must have an answer ready—
Though Christ said: "Be righteous," and that only—
Case a man should ask an awkward question
If a planet's course be found implying—
What? or be it only fly's leg-rubbing,
Straight must be an answer; for man's loving
Of his neighbour and the sun's uprising—
These have now been found to hang together.
If the last be not as Pope supposed, the other
Clearly can't be done as Christian precept.

Then the wrangling becomes never-ending.
Who can hear: "Love God, and love your neighbour,"
While the din is loud and never-ceasing?
Let a Darwin think he had discovered
How plants came and animals developed,
Though it make you, John, no less his neighbour,
Or you, Mary, up the Bishop standeth;
Sayeth: "Be that true, then the glad tidings
Can no more be preached. Burn Darwin quickly."

But an after-Bishop says ; "Did Darwin
Find it out? Fudge ! Aristotle knew it."

Then is much forgetting to be righteous.

So I add my quota to the wrangling.
Yes, the Christ is even, John and Mary,
Very God of very God, Begotten,
Never made. But know the fundamental
Is the thing the dim dust might have spoken—
One by any carpenter engendered ;
One, a man, the breath in him the spirit ;
Of a dim-divined, strange, unknown origin ;
One who, speaking with that voice and gesture,
Speaking while the corn and lilies rustled,
Said : "Oh, learn of me ; be meek and holy."

THE DIVINE

MANIAC, drunkard, slut,
There's poetry in you; but,
If I fill my page with you,
And the slime that oozes through
Cesspool wall and kitchen sink,
In the fashion some people think
So brave—if I should stand before
The eyes of God, at some great door
Into eternity, and hear the crash
Of ultimate music, then the worm
Of my sensation-seeking word,
Remembered there in flash on flash
Of Revelation pure, would squirm,
Horribly sick, as suns were heard
Giving their souls up.

As the sea
Is salt to keep the earth sweet, so to me
Poetry is. What if the time is long
Before the crooked, the slimey, and the wrong

Wither before the purity of song?
What if the day of awe
At beauty shown as the enduring law
It still far off? Let one more finger draw
Music, if faint, from the stretched string
'Twixt man and God: let one more bring,
Pale with the sweat of seeking, a leaf broken
In a new vineyard hither, as a token
Of what would be, if some great angel bore,
Through the hushed streets, a purer Grail,
And mania shrank from the now sweetened core
Of human nature, and Drink became hill-water.
And woman no more was frail,
Nor man a satyr, lusting for earth's daughter.

Fool, it is easier far to make flesh creep,
And souls shrink—as to go where women weep
Over the wilted, withered, spotted thing we bring,
Calling it love. Easy to make hearts wring
With anguish for Desdemona or for Lear,
Put this time by a Gissing in a room
In a mean street of dirt and smelly gloom,
Undone this time by destitution, fear,
Sickness, and hate, not by the strawberry-spotted
Handkerchief let fall that Iago plotted—
But try to see some beauty through the rags
Of beggary, or through the pavement flags,

Where earth is gas-drenched, sewage-drenched, and
dark,

Through broken brick-dust, cold, quenched embers—

That is not easy; try to make men hark,

And fall down on their knees upon the road—

Not Pauls with flaming hearts, but sleek-souled
members

Of the Bengal Club—because one spoke, and showed—

I cannot tell you what: my eyes are blind

With sweat of seeking for the thing behind

This passing show. Men sometimes call it God.

BLACK SHADOW

"BLACK shadow, black shadow, what bringeth thee,
Silent, each morning, to the altar stair?"

"I am the murk of the cavern
In which for years thou madst thy lair."

"I know it, black shadow, I know it.
Try now to climb the altar stair."

"There are massed roses too many,
And lilies fragrant in goblets there."

THE LOOM OF GOD

THE loom of God plies swiftly, weaving
Vesture for man ; and now one stretches out
A hand, and now another, taking wherewith
To clothe men's nakedness. But after time
Vesture wears out, moth-eaten, torn. O man,
Put off thy blood-stained rags ; for I would clothe
thee,

Unto forgetfulness of nakedness,
In the many-coloured, patterned loveliness
That this hand takes each hour from the loom of God,
Being the hand of one who has been *chela*
To Mozart, Heine, Keats, with ears so stopped
With honey of paradise as not to hear
The eternal scold of disagreeable women,
The blasphemous cursing of half-demented men,
The grinding and crunching of the devil's mill.

INNOCENTS

So, was it even so—
In Bethlehem was heard that woe?
The divine will
God did fulfil
In that determined incarnation,
Maugre the lamentation
Foreseen? No mother that had lost
A babe, but would have said:
"Better the hope of heaven
Were dead, were dead, were dead"?
And every father even?

No. God is that mother, God that father is,
And will endure
Even that sorrow, so that sin
Cease, and the world be pure;
So that He win
Mother and father and child at last.

So He was crucified before
Ever Mary that Child bore?
For what is time to One
From whom no thing is hid?
So He was crucified when men
From Herod the dread thing hid?

So He was crucified in Bethlehem?
In hearts of women there and men?
That sin might cease :
For so He hateth sin ?

WORD MUSIC

THE music in some words,
As *mistletoe* and *holly*—
Full of love and folly,
And the laughter of which so empty are
Names of greater moment far,
As *fractions*, *sines*, and *surds* :
And so again I wish that men
Were childish like the mouse and wren.

And Jesus saith that we
Must be as children, or not see
Heaven and the Tree
Of living, with the flame
Of blossom on the same ;
So ever let the stress
Of hard thought give a dress
To clothe our nakedness,
Not all an ashen grey,
But bright as hawthorn spray,
Or such as Jesus blessed,
The Robin Redbreast's breast.

HOSPITALITY AND WAR

GIVE me not bread to eat.
Nor wine to drink.
Help me instead to beat
Down the flames that wink
Out of the earth around
The feet of humankind—
The little tongues of fire,
Licking, without a sound,
Till in a fury, blind,
Crested, leaping the pyre,
They hiss, and ruin, and rave
In wind-blown wave on wave.

SAINT AND SINNER

STOP now ! There are things you overlook.
It may be as you say ; but I have doubts.
Consider this.

You cite that man, a good man, but not good
As Francis was. Then your assumption is
That the best life of all is when the soul,
Surrendered to Christ, takes up the Cross, and lives
Thenceforward serving others—by which you mean
Serving those others in particular ways.
But of that presently.

That man you cite,
Suppose, when young, he had joined a Brotherhood.
Men would have cared for him ; fed him and
clothed him ;
Simply, but so it was no care of his.
He would have moved about the altar, seeing
Beautiful things, and hearing them—much music,
Litanies sung, beautiful rhapsodies read,
Psalms chanted. Should he go among the sick

To pray, the sick are not his flesh and blood ;
He prays, in words that are charged with loveliness—
“Where two or three are gathered together”—so there,
As by the altar, with no care, and shepherded
As sheep with precious fleece. Suppose he washes
A leper's body, he takes no harm from that.
How should he, he whose care-free mind
Nightly lies down with body for deep sleep ?
Not that you understand how body's strength
Grows with such sleep.

“His mind would be full of care”.

Then he must have a strange soul, not to fall
Into the rhythm of beauty !

But he married.

Joined not a Brotherhood, but married a girl.
Went daily to earn his living in some den
Of noise, and dirt, and stupidity, and sin.
All dens are full enough of that. Each evening
Returned with the thought that something might be
wrong
At home—a child fallen sick, or dead.
Always, or almost always, one child dies.
Then he may say, in a later year ; “If Johnny
Had *not* died, how we'd have managed I don't know.
The others cost so much !” How long had he borne

Such fears in his mind as that, if he should die,
There'd only be so much for his wife to bring
The children up on ? But you, childless man,
However make *you* know the difference
Between care for acquaintance and care for one's
own blood ?

However make you know, you unmarried man,
Anything really ?

Do you know how easily hurt
A woman is ? They are different from us men.
Do you know the shame it is for a man to hurt
The girl he remembers loving that first time
He ever saw her ? Do you know the pain to a man
In the coming of the common day again ?

Take a simple thing—the simplest things tell most.
A man and a maid, and let her borrow pencil
From him ; then forget it's his, and put it
In her own pocket. He'll say : "You may keep
my pencil !"

And in their laughter there is happiness
Not till then dreamt of. Why ? Because she's
virginal.

It's all to come. Emotion such as that
Must die down—it would kill the body else.
And to a man it is all a horrible pain ;
Worse, since he cannot speak of it to her,
Or anyone.

So Father,

If when our man is old, he's somewhat roughened,
Body and soul—not to compare with Francis ;
If *his* life-history could not once be praised
By holy men as much as his, the Saint's—
But still you may be right !

Only I'd like

No doubt to be about it, ere I'd wish
My son to join a Brotherhood. And why ?

Who feed us, clothe us, we who preach and teach,
Doctor men, make their laws, write books, or print
them ?

Do anything in fact that is no addition
To food or clothing, or other of the necessities
Of life ? Those who produce food, clothing.
And what we take means so much less for them.
So, seeing there are so many of us already—
Preachers and teachers, doctors, soldiers, sailors,
Policemen, publishers—but the list is endless ;
Seeing that the world thinks all of these are
necessary—

They are not, but the world is very stupid—
I'd hesitate, before I gave approval
To any setting up of saint profession.

I prefer saints who grow corn or make clothing.

THE DOVE

MOTHER, there is a Dove in heaven.
Its flights to earth are one to seven;
That crooked ways may be made all even.

To-morrow's flight will make up seven;
So give me to eat bread without leaven,
And tell me the tale of the Star in heaven.

Locusts and honey wild to eat
Are John the Baptist's only meat:
Shaggy his head and bare his feet.

The wheat and the tares in one a-sowing;
A Garden dark and a Yew-tree growing;
And an ancient debt to Heaven still owing.

Man born of woman, soon thy peace
Will cover thy shoulders like a fleece,
Golden, and that will be my peace.

THE TRUTH THAT SETS US FREE

SPIRIT is, Love is—and nothing else besides.
Sickness and sin beat round in endless tides.
Who shall deliver thee, man, on the waters walking?
“Ere Abraham was, I am”—that word abides.

THE BUNGLER

GET thee a new heart, O thou world of sorrow,
Clouds are dark, but look thou thorough.
Misery is man's own making;
Destitution, sobs, heart-breaking;
Man, to whom give any thing,
Holy Grail, or angel's wing,
And he straight a way will make
Cup to soil and wing to break.

LIGHT

A thing is done that you
Never, never could do.
The apple is made to grow
Red, that would else be white:
Yea, even as snow,
If sun never gave his light.

RESIGNATION

IN a world so dark,
Amid ways so foul,
Soon to lie stark,
With the staring owl
To hoot our knell,
Are ill and well
Not more or less
Of nothingness?

WITHIN

MADE man to beat with other hearts
And touch, and hunger still for more,
Seeking a part in many parts,
But separated at the core ;

Then daily, in that place reserved,
Create creation—should we find
God's image, attributes preserved
In fractioned fraction of a mind?

FROST-BOUND

THE human heart tight round with bands
It ties, and the tongue half-dumb
It shuts behind clenched teeth, and hands
Strangle the thoughts that come ;
And all God's flowers that bloom grow so,
Warmed by the driving sleet and snow.

RESIGNATION

REST weary spirit: cometh night,
And dark, and open doors, and flight.
Need there be more, so near thy knelling,
O'er leaden letters broken spelling?
One with a flute and silver bell
Cometh, and word of what to tell.

FEAR

IT is the dawn: my heart is cold.
Over and over its fears are told
In my untenanted, unshuttered soul.

SYMPATHY

I have been thinking all this autumn day
Of a rare sympathy a woman has;
The rarest I have known.

When, in the field,
A hunter has to turn, to escape death,
Before his mind can consciously take in
The danger, whence and what—if he does turn
Within the fractioned second allowed, and lives,
It is by virtue of an instinctive motor
Moving his muscles. So quick is her sympathy.
Present her with a human soul—in joy,
Happiness, pleasure, misery, remorse;
Telling the truth or lying; speaking sense
Or nonsense; serious or humbugging her—
Instantly her heart beats so in tune—
The required fraction either quicker or slower
That her brain on the instant comprehends.
I have not known a sympathy so marvellous.
It is akin to genius—Shakespeare's, Lamb's.

So all this autumn day, for her the divine
Second or third that brings her marriage on,
And because something of her gladness fills
My soul too, and because of the quick sense
Felt often of sympathy with her (her soul
Being an essence making hearts like hers ;
So making mine)—I have this autumn day
Filled all my thought with joy in her sympathy.

LONGING

NOW, when I see a girl,
And long for her, I know
She doth but stir a longing
Of long ago.

A longing buried in me
In a far-off childhood day :
It wakes and aches, but shortly
It will away.

So, when I long for meadows
Where English roses blow,
It is the same old longing
Of long ago.

In my unseen self it is buried.
It stirs at all that's seen ;
But when it is gone, I shall
I, too, serene.

So, only so, were the sages
Serene. They put their trust
In God, and their unseen longing
Changed to dust ;

And a summer wind came passing,
And blew it out of their soul,
And, serene, they went on marching
Unto their goal.

AGE

THE brain of a man
May be old as old,
As old as Merlin.

His heart is not old ;
His heart is young.

So much that is told
With a ready tongue,
Though wise in its seeming,
Is child-man dreaming
In the land of Nod.

DEATH

How thick the leaves are ;
How heavy the sands lie.
So many men afar,
So many near, to die :
So many dead : so many more to be born.

How could man make so bold
As to claim of God,
That He remember him cold.
Buried beneath the sod ?
Living, he shared the earth with the ears of corn

LIFE

LIFE that Shakespeare disdained,
Thing of Baudelaire's hating—
Had they my children gained ?
Known my mating ?

Cannot each common man
Say as much ?
Brats and a lass—God's plan
In sight and touch.

PRIEST AND SCIENTIST

PRIEST

WHEN, Scientist, you blame this clod
For speaking certainly of God,
Consider this, that He is known,
No transient thing, and He alone
Possibly, after His own kind ;
Seen, therefore, even by the blind.

Christ spoke certainly of God—

SCIENTIST

He was only another clod.

BANSBERIA TEMPLE

ONE who had seen Bansberia *raj* cut down
By stronger neighbour, and had sought in vain
Justice at home, must forth to London town,
And seek it there, Cornwallis said. So pain
First was his lot ; for how such vast expense
(Only to tell a just man of one's plaint,
Only to speak out that which common sense
May judge of—why only with so much taint
Of fees extortionate can that be done ?)
Was he to meet ? He knew. "Let me," he said,
"Go live at Kashi till the seventh year's sun
Ripens my paddy ; let me make my bed
So long among the beggars ; let seven years'
Revenue be stored up." So forth he sailed
To holy Kashi ; there abode ; no tears
Dimming his eyes ; no murmur, nothing wailed.

And then a wonder. Kashi sang to him
No song of earth sun-kissed at dawn, and dim
At evening ; one of birth, and growth, and death,
And change, and fleeting as the mist that breath
Leaves on the glass : but of a *tantra* true,

Ever-abiding. So his passion grew
Still for enlightenment—until it came.
Then what was gain worth ? Let it feed the flame.
Let others plead and wrangle, pay their cash.
He had seen something greater—in a flash,
In flash on flash had the eternal been
Shown to his soul. Henceforth would truth be queen
Of all his steps. He cried : "Let what be done
Be worthy." And then set the seventh year's sun.

What did he do ? He built a temple. Still
It stands, and I have seen it ; but too ill
Would words of mine describe it. Inside, out,
Silent on earth, in pinnacled air a shout,
It doth reveal what to the initiate
Figures pure thought. So unto them a gate
Is opened to deliverance. I outside,
Alien but not unmoved, untouched, abide.

4

PLAY-POEMS

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9

LOVE IN AGE

*"I would have
Some claim upon thee, if I could,
Though but of common neighbourhood.
What joy to hear thee, and to see '
Thy elder brother I would be.
Thy father—anything to thee."*
Wordsworth.

1

Come Sea, and wash my sweetheart's feet.
Since I am old and worn and grey,
I may not kiss them, but you may,
Being still young and blue and fleet.

It the sea was old as Eld is old,
Wrinkled over with brine and age,
'Then it would make her cold as cold,
And buffet her in sullen rage ;

But the sea is young and blue, and plays
With amber and coral and red-fringed weeds
And rock-pool flowers and white pearl seeds
In ways like her own maiden ways.

2

Come stars, and kiss my sweetheart's eyes.
Since in the path is that sweet face,
Do not through interstellar space
Send your light wandering till it dies.

My lamp burns low, and there below
The stars are set. The way is yet
But little : let her light shine bright
For my remembrance where I go.

In and out, over and under,
Making for her a world that glistens
Of sea and starshine, beauty and wonder,
Alone, where only my spirit listens.

3

Not thus the full heart's perfect ease.
So birds come near but never nearer .
If they would perch on hands and knees,
And sing, and make more glad the hearer !

Thus never, Child. So in my mind
I make a world that is more kind.
There beast and bird play at our knees
Under the shadow of great trees.

There is no further need of word
From man to maid, or maid to bird.
All the unspoken is understood
In no more spirit-solitude.

There is no night, for of that sheet
Is made a pavement for our feet,
All wondrous small, and bright as day.
With pattern of the Milky Way.

There is no winter more: the cold
And ice and snow away are rolled.
The East is heaped up for a feast.
The West is smoothed out for a rest.

4

Suddenly comes a stop, a cry.
There is no maid beneath the trees.
There are no bright eyes shining by.
There is no head upon my knees.

Sea, hast thou taken her to thee ?
Stars, is she hid behind the bars ?
East, hast thou led her like a priest ?
West, hast thou laid her down to rest ?

Lay me instead, since I am sad
And grey, and tuned to listen still,
Stone-like, to star-song making glad
The pilgrim after the long hill.

Leave her on earth, since she is bright ;
Weave for her dawn and noon and night,
When all the stars to time repeat,
While the heaven unrolls his sheet.

5

Some souls are as the seeds they sow
In long-tilled fields. Others unfold
Where the winds blow them and they grow.
Their fruit is never reaped and sold.

Which seed art thou ? I am no field,
Safe-hedged, to guard thee. Where the rose
Blows not I bed ; where heather grows,
The mountain ash and prickly shield.

Too far ? You bed among the wheat ?
The bearded corn brushes your knees ?
In lowland streams you wash your feet
Under the shadow of great trees ?

6

There is a way, if you can fare
So far—past verb and noun, the known,
Where souls are half-shut-in, alone,
And breathe only the common air.

Towered on a pinnacle of thought,
A soul can have its full desire ;
Every forbidding burned to naught
Below, in the rough tides of fire.

7

From earth we come, to earth we draw.
But spirit is a flame and leaps ;
So, double-minded, the mind keeps
Changing, and chafes at any law.

By this brown heather, by this brown stream
On me, half-happy, there intrudes
The thought, as in a broken dream,
Of Indian seas, of soft green woods.

So this new love comes breaking in :
This Spring in age, these answerings
To two young hands, knowing no sin,
Held out—this later blossoming's.

To turn it into song in me
Of star and maid, of maid and sea;
To let it beat but in my mind,
And in my body to be blind.

So should the force with light be lit,
As if the stars all shone on it :
It should be bright, as if the blue
Tides of the sea preserved it new.

8

So, later Blossoming, keep you
To the safe hedges and the dew.
I will fare on, but to my feet
Will ring your name-song, clear and sweet.

AN OLD MAN'S PRAYER

THROUGH hells into a deeper hell to go—
That was my lot to me, and women's were
The eyes that made the dark doors open so ;
That now I would not lift a hand, or stir
A foot for one again ; but song is still
Blossom in valleys, trumpets on the hill.

Dante does not betray me, Shakespeare stands
Still with the same deep smile, and Milton's hymn
Makes faster beat the pulses, and the hands
Of Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelley, in the dim
Dusk of my age, hold up a lamp to light
Me more than stars irradiate the night.

Now when my soul is cleansed of what forbade
The happiness for me that others win,
The secrets of all things will make me glad,
Revealed, and, in the temple come within,
I shall be ready, standing at the door,
To open to them, having gone before.

And then no more to be a man, God grant,
And different in kind from other things :
Still for the perfect knowledge thus to pant,
As hart for water-brooks ; but from new springs,
Deathless, to drink, and even with the stone
To feel, time-free, and be no more alone.

AN IRISH MELODY

SHE was as an apple on a dish,
Red, that I put out my hand to.
The old, grey Man—he guessed my wish,
And gave me ashes and sand too.

But I laughed, and said: "Such apple to see,
Red, is worth mud to eat;" and
Then in sweet sleep come over me
I saw bare shoulders, and feet, and

Lips that were lips, but roses too,
And they kissed me awake, and made me
Think of an orchard where there grew
Apples—there met we and stayed we.

STAR WRITING

THIS was his play with Stella—he to write
The stars upon her that make glad the night.
So down she lay, and over her he knelt,
And on her lips long kissed Orion's belt,
And helm and flaming sword. Next on her chin
Castor he kissed and the bright-burnished twin.
On rosy cheek he kissed the Hyades,
And on the other the rainy Pleiades.
Then one remove—to set upon her brow
The seven stars of an enchanted plough.
And o'er the silky softness of her hair
To draw a wind-kissed Cassiopeia's Chair.
Arcturus and his bands
He kissed upon her hands,
And Sirius, Canopus on her feet,
Which, sweet and cool, tempered their parching heat.
Then, seeing there were more, and many too,
"Darling," he said,
"As in the west you see the tired stars do,
That go to bed,

So must you, Stella, an obedient Sweet,
And see where I have spread a perfumed sheet,
Nearer to come, and on your shadowed breast
Kiss all the crowded rest."

BLUE

THERE is a sea, Darling, that never keel
Has ploughed. I will set sail on it,
Following a bird until all grey things change
To blue. Always in blue there seems,
Blue of forget-me-not, speedwell, hyacinth, gentian,
Sea, sky, and glacier ice, a drawing-on
Of the human spirit, a beckoning, to thought
That never soul has been quick enough to seize.
Perhaps it is spread out somewhere beyond that sea.

It is the sea of loving a woman, sweet
For ever by being enjoyed never in full.
Oh, there are moments when human love, so given
Completely, leaves the heart cold ; so that change—
That one might be another man—is craved,
That, rich again, love might be richly given.
Those dead points, where no flowers are blue and
growing,

Put fingers out that touch the soul to cold.
Never will my love be completely given ;
Never given, so never cold. So flowers will grow :
Blue flowers will grow around it, sweetening it ;
Easing the pain ; turning it to a violet.

LAMENTATION

HIS Love is dead, dead ; gone
Where never soft feet wait ;
Roses red grow on
Her grave—have roses late,
Roses red, a worth
For him ? Her face,
Sweeter than roses, earth
Is, or just empty space.

His Love is dead, dead ; gone
Where never cowslips grow :
Upon a graven stone
Four letters in a row.
In one the waste seas flow :
One is like wilted corn :
Two make up all the woe
Dead kisses are, unborn.

INDIRA

I sat watching an Indian child, Indira,
Lying in her mother's lap, her mother one
Beautiful, proud, dressed in a lovely *sari*,
Sakuntala as of old, but now mature,
Able to rise in Parliament, and tell
The listening senators of India's need ;
Able to sit in the temple among the doctors,
And argue of the law. And Indira looked
Under dark lashes, out of her dark, dark eyes,
Friendlily to my blue, but if I said :
"Speak me a poem," then, a little shy,
She'd lower her lashes, and lay her head upon
Her mother's shoulder ; and the gesture made
Her loveliness grow strangely lovelier,
Till I, so full of wondering, hardly breathed.
And so I said I must leave that land, and go
Back to my kind, and lead a common life
Among familiar things, and never see
Lotus again, nor Indira's dark, dark eyes ;
For hard it was to be at peace outside
The fast-clamped doors of such a paradise.

2

And so I left that land, and went and lived
A common life among familiar things,
Until one day Indira came and sat
Among my roses, drank some tea, and talked
Of Oxford and her college there. Then I
Said : "I must die and seek the friendly grave,
Where is no pulse to hear, nor moan, nor sighs."
It was too hard to be at peace outside
The fast-clamped doors of that shut paradise.

3

But Indira came, and sat upon the stone,
And sang an Indian song, and I awoke,
And rose, and said : "I come from where the stairs
Go up and down, and all is white and pure,
And blue wings overshadow ; but no peace
Was there for me for thinking of those days,
And the clamped doors of Indira's paradise.
And so I said to God that He must send
Me back to thee, and God bade one to go,
Leading the way ; and he said : 'Curst art thou
And empty-hearted, since thou didst esteem
Lightly thy kind ; and wilt be empty-hearted
Even with Indira, because some bird
Morning and evening will sing in tones not thine,
And thou wilt feel shut out. When God hath made

Thee and the birds as one, and thou canst sing
With the same throat, still wilt thou empty be
Because of flowers that open to a world
Not thine. When God hath made thee one with rose,
Crocus and woodbine, and thy heart unfolds
Petals like theirs, thou wilt empty be because
Of lightly esteeming thy own kind. Thou then
Wilt envy stones that crumble, because their ways
Are not as thy ways. God will make thee one
With stones that crumble, and thou wilt crumble too,
And then the end. It is not too late. Repent.'
But I said : 'Is she near ? I am content.' "

TO BARBARA

PRINCESS Barbara, come and play.
In pearls and satin, all to-day.
In a long colonnaded hall
Be the queen of old-time ball:
Make the dull, empty chamber blaze
With star and garter. Thread the maze
Of long out-moded dance, until
Powder and patches seem to fill
The floor, with round about a ring
Of stiff brocaded dames; and bring
Ambassadors from Teheran
And Farthest East, with gem and fan,
To watch the Franks display the wares
Of fallen city and crumbled stairs,
With, behind the inscrutable smile,
Cold disdain. Do this awhile,
You and I in the house, alone,
You in your frock; I like a stone,
Still, in the corner. This evoke,
Showing how Louis looked and spoke,
Or the fierce Sarah; how this miss
Promised that gallant glove or kiss.

Do it with gesture, look, and tone,
You and I in the house, alone.

Or be a sapphire, or be gem,
Inanimate, in diadem
Of Semiramis. Be a jet
Lozenge in chancel pavement set.
Or be figure carved at prow
Of Viking ship, or granite brow
Hewn, in court of Ramases.
For my wonder be all these.

2

Throstle Barbara, come and bring
Purcell back and Byrd to sing,
Or boy and girl from lanes less deep
Than now, worn deeper since. They sleep,
The buttercups and daisies saying,
"Simple as ours their lives were—peep
bo!—simple their spinet-playing."
Sing me their songs, or sing me those
That Ronsard loved, or earlier ones,
Those that one sang to his heart's rose,
And she sang after to her sons.
Sing me in English or in French,
As you were pretty dairymaid,
And I a rustic on a bench,
Piping under an elm-tree shade.

Sing me the songs you write yourself,
Slipped through our fingers, fairy-elf,
Crooning them over a wild bird pressed
In your white fingers to your breast.

3

Then let us to the Sorbonne go,
With open book and footstep slow,
And steep us there, doors shut, in lore,
Written, of Wisdom, blind and hoar ;
Blind, but with inward eyes lit up,
And moist lips from the blood-red cup.
Let us, loins girded, climb the steep
Of Delphos, and the vigil keep,
Which ended, ended then the night
Of darkness, and the dawn is bright
Over new shores ; the vigil kept
By Dante while the dumb world slept.
Then hear what Verlaine has to tell,
Or Baudelaire ; or cast a spell
Over each other from Keats's book
Or Yeats's ; so Apollo's crook
Follow to pastures where grow flowers
That know no death nor winter hours.

4

Gipsy Barbara, come and dance
On thyme, bare-footed. Tell me chance,
When with silver I have crossed

Your hand. But no, no, what a frost
Is fortune told. Then tell me true
Things that make delight for you—
Beech mast, acorn cups, and sloes,
Crabs, and nuts ; the briar rose,
Knapweed, Lady's Tresses, ferns,
Wild geranium leaf that burns
Blood-red every autumn ; broom,
Sorrel of the wood, the gloom
Dense of forests—tell me all ;
Of all creatures, too, that call
To each other, and to you,
Climbing up the downs you knew.
First the spinney, then the pool
Where you dipped your body cool,
With the morning star ablaze
In the spear-point studded ways,
And the owl and moth still winging
To the hour of first bird's singing.
What were better, in this room,
Than gipsy woman, gipsy man,
Slipping off their coil of doom,
Should tell each other where they ran
As children, and remember things,
The very names of which are wings
More than wine is ever. Kick
Satin slippers off, and quick
Down on sofa sink, with knees
Folded under, which to kiss

Were to poet-spirit ease
Greater far than writing this.
Tell, then, gipsy woman tell
Of leaf and blade and cup and bell
And moss and lichen, wet with tears,
Star-shed in the night ; of seed
Fallen from swollen, yellow ears ;
Of great moon-daisies, climbing weed
In hedges, thick with berries red
Or black—But how ? How tell ? Though led,
Love-lamped, to woman, what does man
Know of her nature, when the span
Is over ? How, then, slip the coil,
And grow one with the stranger beat
Of heart in those that never toil,
And have no breasts, nor knees, nor feet ?

5

Pagan Barbara, hear this too.
Do one thing and never rue.
Born to sing, a poet sings,
Rooted in the depth of things.
Not for him to love one maid,
And in peace to ply a trade,
Busy keeping body, hands.
His to watch, where'er he stands,
With unshadowed eyes, who goes,
Kith and kin and friends and foes ;

For a moment being each,
Speaking ever a new speech ;
So to gather in his verse,
Shadowed by the wanderer's curse.
I am weary of my loss ;
Be to me dread Atropos :
Take the bitter, horrid shears,
And cut off the weary years.
As for you, you child divine,
Mix the herbs, the poison nine.
Since the Fates set golden door
Open for you ; shut the dark ;
Lit your sun ; shut out the frore ;
Made you sister of the lark ;
Whence no travail, and songs need
Dark as light, both flower and weed—
As for you, you child divine,
Mix the herbs, the poison nine,
And then gather in your verse,
Shadowed by the wand'erer's curse.

A' MAN OF A WOMAN

GOD took some river water, I think, and wine,
And birch tree leaves, and ivy, and dark of pine
Forests, and violets, and dew-wet white
And pink of hedge rose for to make that sprite ;
Who comes to me with rustle of bearded corn,
And first lark's singing in the breath of morn ;
Who comes to me who have loved golden words
Of bibles, and all song of all wild birds ;
Who comes to me who have gone up and down,
Seeking for one to be my heart's wild rose,
And have not found her ever ; so that brown
Eyes I have seen haunt me, and blue, and those
Breasts I have never seen—oh, would God take
Me, and put me to sleep for pity's sake.

5

LAST POEMS

PEACE

THERE is one peace, the peace that falls
Beyond where man to maiden calls,
And maiden answers: where no day
Endeth in night, and night is grey
Before the dawning; where no light
Is shaped as violet, lily, sight
Bringing a gladness to man's heart.
It is a peace that draws no part
From aught possessed; be it such thing
As night that makes the stars to sing
Along the fields where light is sown
Thickest, which little is man's own.
It is a peace that doth begin
While noises harsh, discordant, din
His ears. It would not cease to grow
Deeper and deeper, even if woe,
As men conceive, were now his lot.
It cometh not from thing forgot.
Old misery : and joy to be
Addeth not to it. By the Sea
Of Galilee 'twas spoken plain :

And when it falls, it falls like rain
On thirsty fields, where the hard clod
Is sweetened for the flowers of God.

ETERNITY

VAUGHAN saw eternity one night
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
All calm as it was bright.

And such it is. Our teachers saw
That splendour without awe,
Nor on one night alone. For them
It stayed as the star of Bethlehem
Stayed. For them no Herod-sword
Made black the translated word.

HOPE

IF you believed that Christ was Joseph's son,
Nor sinless utterly, and yet believed
He walked on the waters, fed the multitude
By the lake-side, raised Lazarus, and died,
And rose the third day.

 If you believed that man
In God, the infinite Spirit, lived and moved
And had his being ; if you believed infinitude
Ended not at your skin, where you begin,
Which were no infinite, but verily
Is, so that nothing else can be but thought,
Idea, or image of God, by God sustained ;

If you ceased teaching children they are born
In sin, if you ceased putting before their minds
The probability, nay the certainty
That they will hourly and daily sin, until
Death is their wages :

 What if you tried that way
Some fifty years, what might the world be like,
The fifty ended ? Worse, you think ? much worse ?

There is but one thing worth the struggle of man—
Christ-consciousness. Existence without the hope
Of reaching that, for man or ape or midge,
Is simulacrum, whether you dwell on earth
Or heaven.

I see it not impossible utterly
That Joseph's son should grow from boyhood up,
Not sinless utterly, but, like Samuel,
Obedient unto God, and striving ever
For purity and righteousness, until
Forty days in the wilderness should show
His brooding mind the true relationship
Of God to man and man to God; henceforth
Sinless because of the strength that knowledge gave;
Able to heal, as walking in God's light;
Able to walk the water, being spirit;
Able to raise up Lazarus as dead
Only in his man's thought; able to rise
Himself from death, as being the imperishable
Image of God.

I see it not as utterly
Impossible, God knows, that here on earth,
Years hence or even instantly, a man
Or woman, any man or any woman,
Or a mere child, after the forty days
Allotted him or her or it of prayer
And meditation in life's wilderness,
Should to men's haunts and ways return a Christ,

Able to heal, to walk the waters, feed
The multitude, raise Lazarus, rise himself :
And that is what I would teach myself to know.

The other way, your way, what sense is there
In it ? It helps me not to tell myself
That I was sick and shall be sick again,
Even many times : and would you have me tell
My body that ? It helps me not to say,
I having many miles to walk, that I
Am weak, and cannot walk so far for pain
Of weariness, and being foot-sore ; so
I say not that. It helps me not to learn
To tell myself I cannot.

How can it help me, then,
To tell me, spirit, that I, a sinful man,
Must sin, that what Christ rose to must for me
Be harder far to reach, if not impossible,
Here or hereafter. (I speak of Christ as risen
To higher things, deeming the carpenter's boy
Hardly the equal of the Christ who gave
Judas the sop, and in Gethsemane
Prayed and bade others watch and pray.)

I think

This is worth thinking of, and that nothing more
Calls for man's patient thought than all the sad
And damnable imbecility of his ways
Of dealing with himself.

LIFE

THIS is the stream that the broken human pitchers
All have dripped in since the beginning of time ;
Men's children's tears and the tears of the Lamentation ;
Abel's blood, and the blood of a million crimes ;
And there in the centre that curdled, blood-red current
Flows from the broken door where Love, behind,
Wrings out the dumb-struck anguish that no healing
Human can heal, and even God seems blind.
This is the stream that the broken human pitchers
All have dripped in since the beginning of time.
And there his steps will end—but no, for a wisdom,
His, once earth's, and yet once more to be
Earth's, he is shod with, and his thighs the current.
Even that desolate, hissing, curdled sea,
Part as he crosses; and follows a long wake, flying,
Of birds, and some on his shoulders perched; the sun
Bright on his naked limbs, bright on the plumage
Of those swift birds whose new life is begun
With his; for the bondage of Man made all Creation
Groan in travail. The travail now is done.

EPILOGUE

SHUT the insane World out.
I live above
That wreck-strewn sea.
I see the cradle
There in the stable,
And Magi bending low the knee.
I see the dove
Descend on Christ;
I see him priced;
I hear the talk on the Emmaus road;
I see the coals burning at Galilee;
I am where Peter's lambs abode.
Years pass, and into hell I go
With Dante, but the cradle
Still in the stable
Is, and Magi bend the knee.
I see Beatrice, and know
All things in heaven and earth and sea;
And still I am where Peter's lambs abode.
There is no first or last:
All change is past.
There is no far or near:
Stars are my friends upon the road: I hear

Milton intone his psalm :
I hear the calm
Of great verse sung unto a little clan
By Keats, unheard
Save by the quiet primrose, and the span
Of heaven, and all the feathery things and furred.
I pour the blue
Of summer skies into a cup, and drink
Moonlight and dew :
Manna is all my meat.
I wash all men and women's feet ;
And every child I think
My own, and see
That child laid in the cradle,
There in the stable,
And Jesus bending low the knee.

